



"A WICKED BUCK."

A Bachelor's Paradise

OF

Life on the Canadian Prairie 45 years ago.

(When men—and women—did the work.)

By

FELIX J. TROUGHTON.



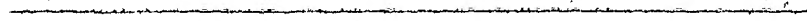
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A Bachelor's Paradise.

SOUTH OF THE CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY, 45 YEARS
AGO.

BEING THE EXPERIENCES OF A SETTLER AT THAT TIME.

THE experiences I am going to relate took place nearly half a century ago, before the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway had been completed, when the famous "North-West Mounted" were policing the Western country, and Assiniboia, Saskatchewan and Alberta were known as the North-West Territories.

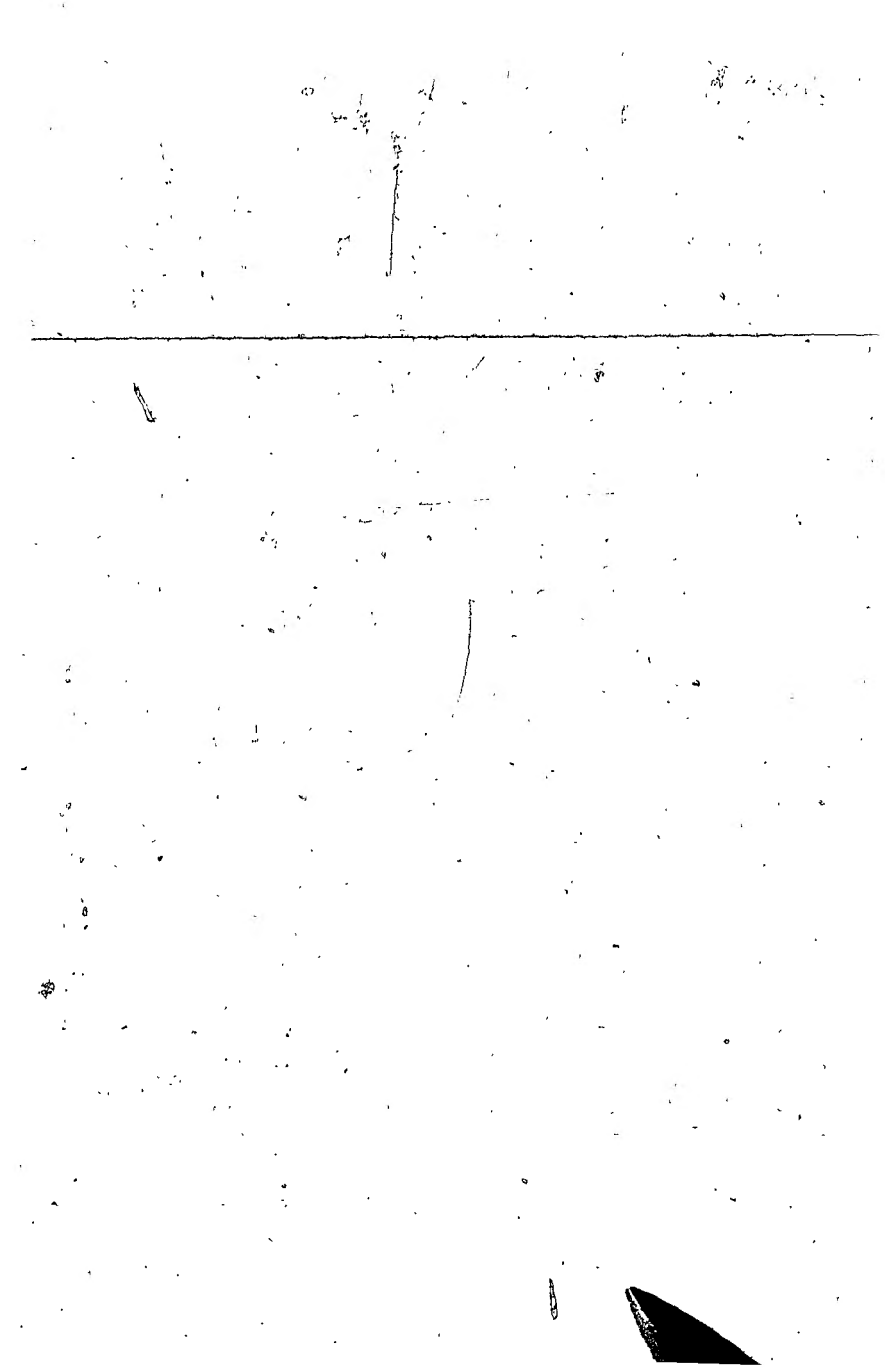
Much has transpired since those days. To-day the tractor is used on the majority of farms, even in the Peace River country, the last Great West, a country abounding in almost everything that Providence could provide—fuel and water, oil and mineral, with a climate much more equable than our old friend the prairie. To the average plucky, physically fit, and red-blooded young man, nothing should appeal more. Were the

writer a younger man, any hesitation would be short-lived; by springtime he would be there. Such an opportunity will not occur again in Canada, and it is a grand chance for a young man to strike out for himself, stick to it, and eventually become independent.

~~The average reader might imagine that the author~~ is in the land settlement business, but such is certainly not the case, though he does say "Let's go" to the Peace River country. Living was far cheaper forty-five years ago, flour, per 100 lbs, cost \$2.50; eggs were 10 cents a dozen; potatoes 25 cents a bushel; bacon—home cured—2 cents a pound; wheat 25 cents a bushel; oats 15 cents, and everything else in proportion; blackstrap (molasses), gunpowder, yeast cakes, boots, made at Stony Mountain Penitentiary, were \$2.50 a pair, and the soles were pegged! Now in the "good old summer time" these boots were worn *without* socks, but—the interior of the boots was washed out. "How often?" you ask? Oh, periodically, but only when really necessary, from a sanitary point of view.

Perhaps you would like to hear something about the "Bachelor Farmers" of those days, so I quote from an article which appeared in a Manitoba paper at that time.

"There are no more amiable, industrious, unfortunate, and persevering persons than those who are known as bachelors; generally excellent men, existing in considerable numbers in various portions of this country, but becoming poorer, more unhappy, more unhealthy, more desolate as the years roll by. These hermits have





“MEDITATION.”

not been disappointed in love, they have not met with various misfortunes, they start to make homes on good farms, intending to settle down when they have made things comfortable around them, but instead of becoming better, matters become worse; nor can it be otherwise.

"The young man rises in the morning, leaves unmade the bed that has not perhaps been made for weeks, he then feeds his oxen, and in the unswept and dusty house prepares a hasty and ill-cooked breakfast, which is eaten from off unwashed dishes. The bread is generally sour, hard or dry, the butter salty and rancid, the coffee worthless, the meat burned on one side and raw on the other. The breakfast table is left covered by dirty dishes and slops, and a million flies gather to feed in undisturbed peacefulness. The unrefreshed bachelor goes to his work lonely, miserable and dyspeptic. At noon he unyokes his oxen and turns them loose to feed, then goes into his shack and makes a hot fire in order to get his dinner. Heated by hard work under a blazing sun, a good wash, a cool room, and a well-cooked meal is what he requires, and what he cannot have. At supper, it is the same thing over again. His underclothes, seldom washed, become clogged by perspiration, and his bedclothes are in the same unhealthy condition.

"When he is away at work, the hawks soar around the forsaken house and catch the chickens in the yard; the pigs get into the garden, if he has one, and the calves get out of the enclosure and suck the cows. Sometimes the deserted house is burned down from a

spark that may drop from the neglected stove. When the bachelor has to go to town for supplies, mail, etc., cattle get into his grain fields, or pull down his stacks, and there is no one to let the dog loose, so the marauders riot at will undisturbed. So the years go by, the man becomes poorer, and has that peculiar neglected look common to men who live alone. Health soon becomes impaired, and the mind often sympathises with the body.

"What the bachelor requires in his home is a broad-shouldered, stirring wife, who will keep the house in order, as well as the husband who owns it, and who will see that clothing and bedding are made clean, and are kept so; who will serve a well-cooked meal with fresh, sweet bread of her own making; who will see that groceries are good, and that proper value has been received for money expended; who will wash and mend her husband's clothing, and will remove the shingle nails that have been used as substitutes for buttons; one who will look after the hens' nests, see that the dairy is kept in order, and who will place the Bible on the table when the day's work is done.

"The dejected and forlorn bachelor will then be transformed into one of the lords of creation. His bearing will be erect, his eyes clear, and his purse full, his garden will have flowers, and his shirts will have buttons. Instead of dead flies, stale crumbs, and grease spots, there will be a clean cloth on the table, and strawberries and cream in season."

Homesteading conditions created no hardship on a

settler in those days. When making application for a homestead one could have anything up to six hundred and forty acres, also pre-emptions could be bought at a very reasonable price, and the Land Office fee for a homestead was ten dollars (£2), following which certain conditions had to be fulfilled: these were the breaking and cultivating of fifteen acres, building a house thereon, and residing there for not less than three consecutive months in the year for three years.

I recall my first experience of riding in a buckboard, as an interlude, for "settling" reminds me of it. A neighbour volunteered to drive me to the Land Office, he being the proud possessor of a pony and buckboard. The name of this vehicle must have derived its name from the word "buck," the same as a horse. Because there being three of us in the rig, it fell to my lot to "sit behind," or over the back axle. Twenty-four miles under such conditions are enough to shake your teeth out! The discomfort was unmentionable, for a buckboard has no springs!

Upon the conditions being fulfilled, application is made for a "Patent." In due course of time, the Homestead Inspector arrives to ascertain if the applicant has completed the required duties. In one case, learning that there was a shortage in the land broken, as required by law, he hesitated. Suddenly he enquired, "Where can I obtain water for my horse?"

Taking the animal some short distance away, water was given to it, the Inspector looking on. The horse drank so much that Mr. Inspector was more than

delighted, and accepted the conditions as having been completed to the satisfaction of the Government. The patent was issued in due course.

Under no circumstances should a settler commence to build until he is sure of a plentiful and permanent supply of water. To sink a forty foot hole, six feet in diameter, and stone it up, after having bored through six feet of blue clay, and striking what seemed a plentiful supply of water, only to find later that it was just a pocket which gives out, is a sore disappointment. What are you going to do? Melting snow daily in a wash boiler, for a few head of cattle, means a whole winter day's work, and then again, snow water is far from satisfying, and the beggars swallow a tub full at a gulp! The only alternative was driving them to where water was obtainable, five miles away, three times a week! Believe it or not, as our friend Ripley says, but fuel and water are the two greatest necessities for a settler.

Forty miles from the main line, by ox team, is a mighty slow undertaking, occupying about a day and a half. To anyone who has handled these gentlemen, they must admit that it requires the patience of about a dozen Jobs. Exasperating? Truly, brother, but the expression is somewhat mild. And cunning lads as well. On one occasion, when they had been turned out at the dinner hour, and their services were again required in the afternoon, could they be found? Search where one would, neither hide nor hoof could be seen. Where in the Sam Hill had they got to? After searching

diligently for a considerable time, and returning after a fruitless search, they were found. Where, do you ask? Near their own stable, but in the centre of a thick bluff where they could not have been seen.

After this, Mr. Ox had a bell attached to his neck, which put an end to his hide-and-seek tactics! And it is sweet revenge for him to place his fairy foot on yours, after you have had occasion to knock the stuffing out of him—when circumstances, and they were many, warranted such punishment. Will he budge that hoof of his? Probably, when he is ready so to do, but, generally speaking, his nibs receives a good biff on the snout or a hack on the shins.

As an instance of the patience required when handling such animals, and in driving them, particularly, I remember on one occasion that a settler was driving north for his semi-annual supplies, and was asked for a lift by a minister of the Gospel, who had reason to go into town. After covering some miles of the journey, the minister became rather rudely awakened by the epithets hurled at the oxen at various times, plus the application of too frequent uses of the black snake, which is no more to the oxen than a shoe string. Enduring it as long as he possibly could, the minister asked permission to drive, remarking that it was simple to drive without making use of bad language, which was quite unnecessary. So permission was given, and all went well for some time, but after a few miles had been covered, and many "get ups" and "dear mes" had been uttered, with many a guttural

murmur of annoyance, he said, "I guess you had better handle them," to the driver!

One great advantage of oxen is their harness, or the yoke; if the latter, you simply withdraw the pin, slip out the bow, lift off the yoke and the animals are free; if harness—unfasten the hames at the bottom, pull them off, and the collar.

Horse thieves were very much in evidence in those days, too. Although such animals were very scarce—one team cost \$600—most of the settlers who were better off had either a team, or a single horse. One night three respectable-looking men rode up to the shack in the evening, and asked if they could get supper, which request we willingly granted. But when bedtime arrived, they expressed a desire to sleep in the barn rather than in the house. Early next morning we were aroused by several revolver shots; our friends wanted their breakfast. Some days later we heard they were horse rustlers. On one occasion a settler had camped for the night on the trail, and had tied his horses to the waggon, he himself sleeping under it. When he awakened in the morning his horses had gone.

Stopping places, where you could obtain a meal for two bits (25 cents), and bed ditto, were a great blessing at that time, especially on a bad night, when both man and beast needed shelter and warmth. The food, though, varied very considerably. At one place where dinner was served—it was a Monday, and washing day (this day should be on Mr. Cotsworth's new calendar, as the world over this seems to be the day for such

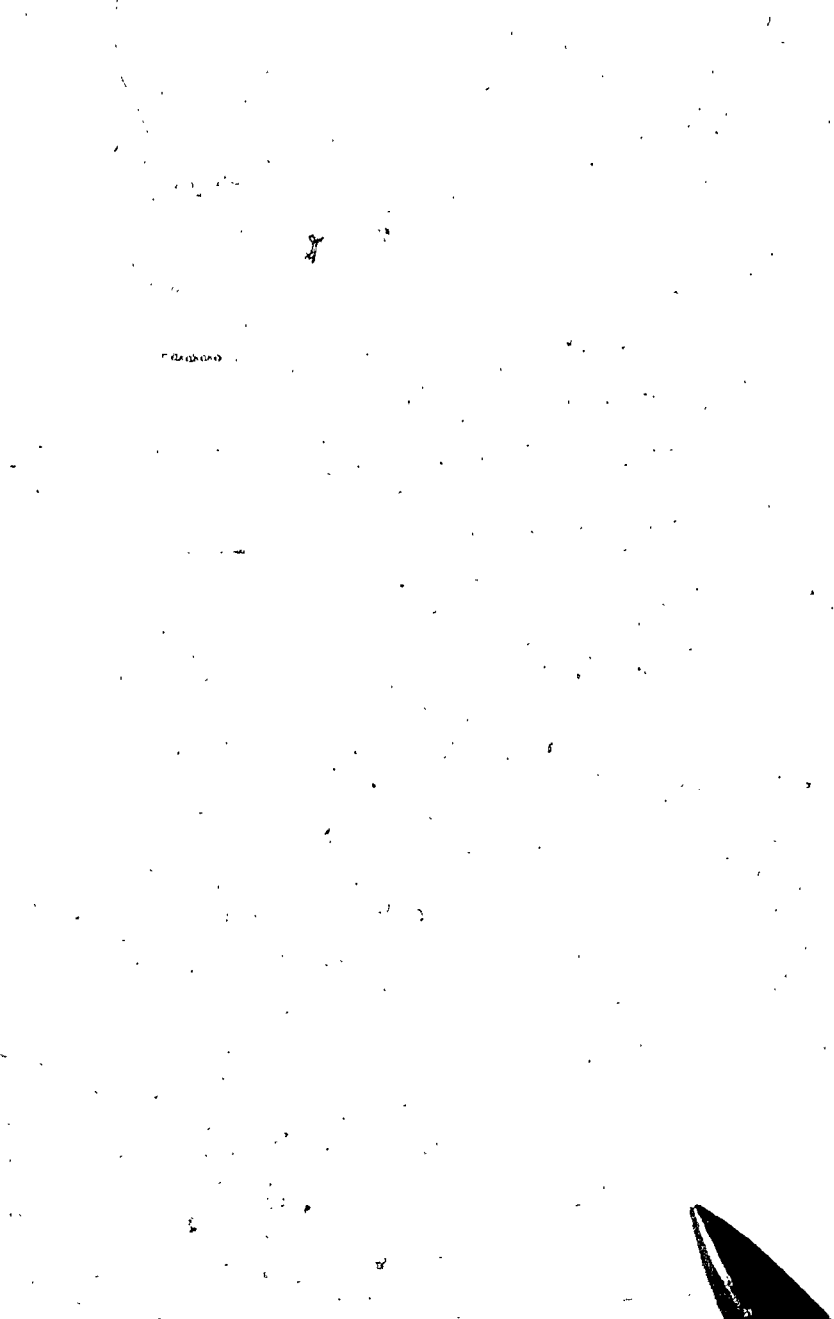
duties)—tea, as usual, was on the menu, always tea, good, bad, or poison, but methinks that they must have used the water that red flannel had been washed in, it had such a vivid appearance. And the taste? However, it was "hot," and the consequences were not disastrous. At another place, having occasion to put up the night, a desire was expressed to retire, as bedtime approached. The proprietor showed me to my room, by way of a ladder, to the upper floor, *i.e.*, under the roof, with no ventilation, and only a lamp. Across this room was a curtain, dividing it into two compartments. Later on, voices were heard proceeding from the other side of the curtain. Next morning the information was imparted that a couple were spooning there, apparently quite unembarrassed—in fact it was the usual thing at that time, where there was a daughter in the family and the accommodation was limited!!

Forty-five miles, spring and fall, for supplies was the custom then, so that one had to jot down weeks ahead just what was required; woe betide you if anything had been forgotten; if you had, then you had to go without it, find a substitute, or wait until the next trip. And it is really marvellous what a person can dispense with if compelled to do so; for instance, if we had no nails we used wooden pins, if we had no hinges we made leather ones, (shingle nails were mighty handy to replace a button), and as for groceries and clothing—well, one took pretty good care that these were not forgotten. Finding substitutes for articles omitted, tended, to a large extent, to make a man independent, and if people

to-day bought only what they really needed, the average home would not be cluttered up with a lot of "junk." Supplies then consisted chiefly of flour, tea, blackstrap, gunpowder, yeast cakes (if you made bread), baking soda, tobacco, coal oil, sugar and such-like, usually in bulk if you could afford it. A three hundred pound barrel of yellow sugar (pretty damp, with something to make weight), some bags of flour, and a box of tea were the really important items. Soap—goodness!—it was nearly forgotten. Yes, soap was used in moderation, but such a luxury, the exposed parts were only washed at times. And a shave? P'raps. A bath? Let us change the subject—just a wee bit too embarrassing.

A man from Scotland visited the district one summer, positively a Scot to judge from his lingo, and he seemed very much attracted by the lay of the country, and the people in it. On being interrogated as to his candid opinion of what he had seen he replied—"I like the country, I like it very well, the soil is good, the air is pure, and, there are some right jolly good fellows."

A strange sight at the time, and stranger still to recollect, is that of the late Edgar Dewdney, the Honourable, I beg his pardon, then Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, as it was termed at that time, sitting in front of a bachelor's kitchen stove frying bacon at the end of a fork, and his friend White, (Billy,) who later became an eminent lawyer and K.C. But he was no smoker. Tucketts T. & B. was the tobacco, plug, at that time, and friend White would cut some off,





"JUST POSING."

rub it in his hands, fill his pipe and light it, with our true friend the sulphur match, commonly called "stinkers." But could he get a smoke? Not for nuts, he would light and prod, and relight and empty out, and re-fill! but no real good smoke, don't think he cared about it anyway.

A plug of tobacco was the charge made for performing the hair-cutting act (mens of course, there were no bobbed heads then) and sad were the hashes made of some heads, no tonsorial artistry about the job you can rest assured. While on the subject of tobacco, mention must be made of "kinnakinik." This was a favourite with the Indians. It consisted of the layer lying under the outer covering of the Red Willow. They removed this outer layer and then scraped the inner, whitish layer off, dried it, and mixed it with their tabac. as they called it.

They were very peaceful tribes in those days, yet early in the uprising of '85, the Riel Rebellion, the settlers were rather anxious as to what might happen. A stand of rifles was sent up from Ottawa, but foolishly kept in one house, instead of being distributed through the district. What would have happened had the Indians risen against the whites is not hard to explain,—probably taken one house at a time, and shot and scalped the inmates, then what use would the rifles have been? As you treat an Indian, so will he treat you. But there was one white settler, with a large family, who would not allow an Indian near his place and ordered them off on every occasion; the consequence was, that they

stole one of his small children, who, reports say, was found at Brandon many years later.

Dirty beggars, some of these Indians were, too. Finding a dead pig near the place, it had been skidded away a few days before, but had not been buried, they attacked it with their knives, cut it up in lumps, and put it in—their blankets, around the waist; this was the Indians favourite place to pack things—shopping bags to them. One Indian in particular, seeing maggots on the carcase, whipped out his knife, scraped them off and—ate them!! One cold winter's night, in fact it was well-nigh a blizzard, a tap was heard at the door, and on opening to see who in the dickens was out on a night like this, three Indians (bucks) were seen standing there, making overtures for admission. Well, after much consideration and hesitation, we finally decided to take a chance and let them in, it was too bad a night even to turn an Indian away, although we did have misgivings about being scalped, and that sort of thing. You will ask, what did you give them to eat? Probably some slapjack, bacon, and tea, though they provided their own grub, having frozen fish inside their blankets. Asking permission, or making signs as to what they wanted, they put the fish in the oven, just as they were, no attempt to clean them, and when done, they devoured all—but the head.

The Indians are expert tanners, that is the squaws, for they do all the dirty work, the bucks do the providing. Give them a "green" -cow, -or other hide, some "pimmity" (grease), a little tea, and a bit of "tabac,"

plus say \$2.00, and in a few weeks time they'll return the skin beautifully tanned, just as soft and as pliable as a kitten's ear. Mocassins are made by them too—none of your "store goods," but the genuine article, made of buckskin, sewn with sinew, and, best of all, good long leather thongs for tying on with. It used to be quite an art to tie on a mocassin properly, but once on, they are, the most comfortable of all footwear, when the weather is cold and dry, you don them say in November, and discontinue them sometime in March, but the change from mocassins to shoes is very awkward at first, you feel as though you were away up off the ground in shoes, whereas with a mocassin your foot is flat on the ground; the heel of a shoe prevents this, hence the reason why such footwear is so beastly cold. While on the subject of winter wear, this is what happened when a fellow tried to make his own fur cap; having had good reason to shoot a collie dog, he thought he would skin it, tan it, and make a cap. Well, something resembling a tea cosy appeared in due course of time, but, believe me, my friend didn't wear it very long, he got jollied too much. What do you think he had done. Made it so that the fur pointed upwards, consequently all the snow collected in it, which made it quite a weight to pack around on one's head.

Christmas parties used to be quite an event, not that there were many such giddy festivities, but one occurs to me, that took place in '84. I was duly invited, and was confronted with a problem. It was the custom to wear a "boiled collar" on such an important occasion, and

whilst these articles were plentiful enough, every darned one was dirty. As luck had it, goodness only knows where it came from, but there it was, a packet of starch! Possibly some might have been borrowed for this occasion, but the way seemed bright for the production of the much needed article. So when all the necessary details had been attended to such as washing and ironing, the iron no doubt was loaned too, starching was the next item on the programme. Following the directions on the packet, the ironing process was then undertaken, but—with what disastrous results! The darned iron was cemented to the collar, and when disconnected it was all stuck up with starch. A second attempt was made but with the same results. We were in a quandary, as, knowing that in all probability all the other fellows would be sporting one, we hated like thunder being compelled to wear a flannel one, on such a very important occasion. However, there was no help for it, so there was no alternative but bow to the inevitable. But what to do with the starch, it seemed a great pity to throw it away, so one fellow, he must have had a brain wave, suggested that we ate it. With the addition of some sugar, it made quite a tasty feed, and being hot, was very acceptable to the inner man. As for the collars, they were burnt!

However we arrived at the house where we were to spend our Christmas. Upon entering, we were cordially received and shown into the living room, a huge room with a cracking good fire burning in the "black" giant. We had a gay time, plenty to eat, but—nothing

to drink, no hard stuff, which to a certain extent detracted from the camaraderie of the company assembled; we did not even have the smell of a cork! Nevertheless, being invited to remain the night (we had no intention of doing otherwise) blankets, *ad lib* were thrown on the floor and all hands "piled in." and no doubt slept soundly; But not this child, the big family dog, for some reason best known to himself, selected my nest as his choice of a bed. All went well for some time, until I moved, and he growled, not being of a very friendly disposition, so it was not a particularly pleasant night for one person at that party.

Before going to a party, all the young men had to go through a course of preparation, days ahead, and one undertaking was—a hair cut. Mention has before been made about this, and sometimes a six months growth of beard had to be removed, for which the "usual" charge was made. On a very special occasion, when a trip to town could be combined with it, the services of a professional barber were required. So in combination with a trip to the railroad town, and after seeing your old cronies, and of course, putting your foot on the brass rail as long as you wanted, an adjournment was made to the tonsorial parlour, which was not like the elaborate establishments there are to-day. During prohibition days, when you had to obtain what liquid stuff you needed from Winnipeg, after you had finished with the barber, you purchased a small box of matches from him at a cost of fifteen cents, which means that you were presented with a small drink free.

There is a story, very prominent at that time, as being one against the Mounted Police, of an Indian, with his Red River cart, coming into, or going out of town, a squaw sitting in the cart. The Police must have had their suspicions, because they stopped the Indian and made a thorough search of the cart; shafts, wheels, harness, in fact every place they could possibly think of, but could find nothing, so the Indian was allowed to pass on. Later they heard that the old squaw was sitting on a keg of whisky!

Suffering from untold agony, due to toothache, the long trip was undertaken in order to visit a dentist, one of those experimenting chaps, but upon arrival in town, it was learned that he was away. And after coming all that distance. Terrible. But—after several drinks of "four per cent." beer (which they pour out of a bottle and then cork up again) the pain somewhat moderated, and with addition of more beer, the pain "seemed" to vanish. That night, when it came to closing time, I told the boss I wanted to go to bed, or gave to him understand so, he went into the bar, emptied the day's takings into an empty cigar box and showed me to my room. On opening the door, I discovered a man sleeping on the floor, no sign of any bed.

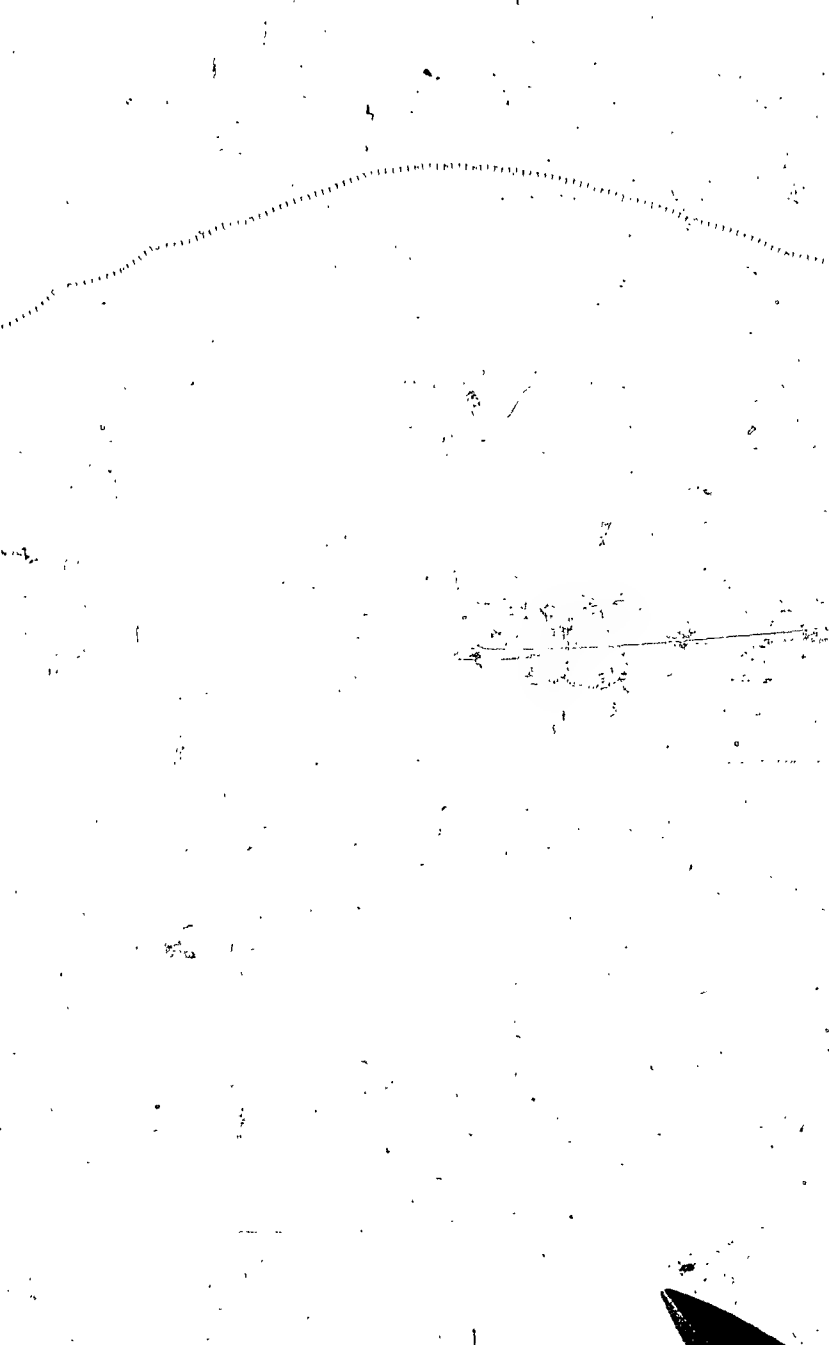
Naturally the question was asked as to where I was to sleep, when the boss answered "with Ed." Expressing great surprise and remarking that I was unacquainted with the man, the boss became quite indignant and snapped back—"Hell, you can get acquainted with him."

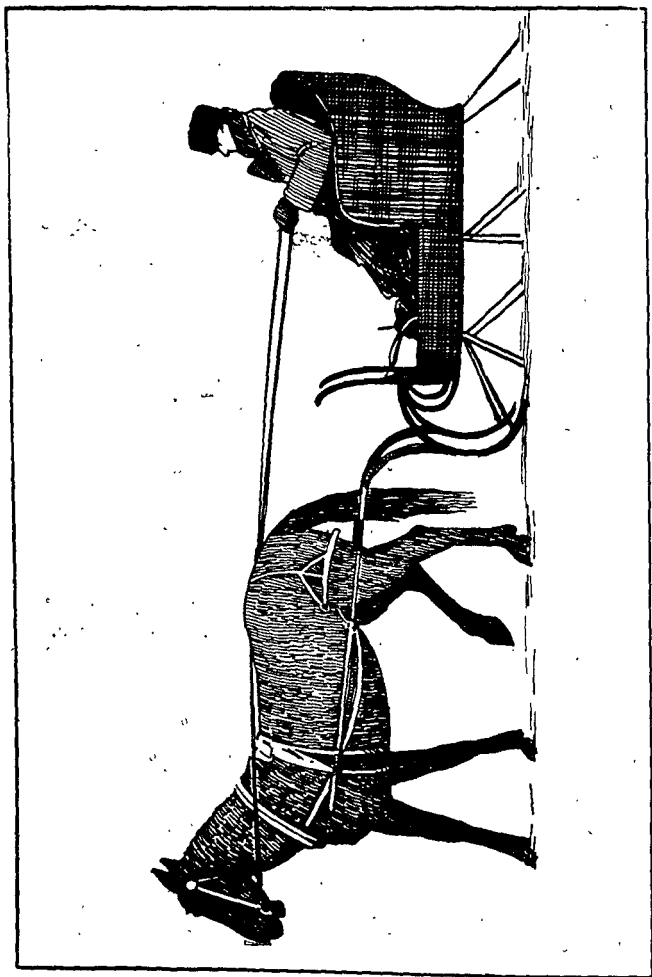
Prairie fires had a certain attraction for a newcomer to the western country, being a complete novelty to nearly all. One, in particular, will never be forgotten, because it simply meant a matter of being wiped out, or otherwise. The first indications were signs on the horizon like wisps of smoke, followed later by the smell of burning grass. Then the smoke became denser and denser, the sun looking like a blood red orb. Suddenly, once in a while, appeared what seemed like the flicker of a flame, then the flames became more noticeable, growing higher and higher all the time, then you could hear the crackling of the burning scrub, clearing up all and everything that blocked its progress. As a prairie fire will make its own wind it seemed to be heading straight for our place. The first steps taken were to plough a fire-guard around the place, a few furrows, and then backfire to it. Backfiring consists of lighting the grass some distance back from the fire guard ploughed, and allowing it to burn up to this guard, care being taken not to allow the fire you are burning to get out of your control, in other words light a small surface and then extinguish it. A pail of water and a wet sack should be within reach.

On one occasion, after the worst part of the fire had passed by, the writer saddled a horses and rode over to the house of a neighbour who was away at the time, to endeavour to save what he could. The house was apparently doomed, but with perseverance, it was saved. Later the owner heard the report that I had been killed, fallen out of the house I was trying to save,

whereas the truth was—that I had put my head through the window to escape being suffocated by the heavy smoke; but I did have my eyebrows burned off. Prairie fires cause their own draught, and once they make headway, are beyond control. But to-day it is questionable if such a sight can be seen—the upland grass is grazed down, the tractor is busy in the land, settlement has advanced, road allowances have been made, so one would have to go far afield to witness such a scene. The first summer, just by way of diversion, a light was set to some grass which soon got beyond control. Where it went, goodness only knows, into the States probably, and no doubt did very considerable damage. But this little experiment never occurred again, the government levying a fine of one thousand dollars on anyone found guilty of so doing.

Of course one of the first buildings that are built when sufficient settlers warrant it, is a Church. The one erected at this time was given the name of "All Saints." It was built of logs hewn on both sides and chinked and plastered, the floor joists, rafters etc., were whip sawn, being so far as the frame work went, by voluntary labour, really a building "bee". The floor was of hemlock. Now anyone who has handled and worked in this kind of material, well knows the exasperation etc., in laying a floor. It is said, and truly so, that, to say the least of it, the language used was something shocking, quite unfit for publication, but being unconsecrated, it did make a difference. Bishop Anson, brother of the Earl of Lichfield, was the first Bishop,





“OFF FOR THE MAIL.”

and prior to the Church being erected, held service, now and again, at a private house. When it was possible to hold service in the winter months, the service was at one p.m., in order that the settlers might be able to return home and do their "chores" before dark.

After all these years, the Church is standing there to-day.

Everyone in this country has heard of a house-warming here is an account of one of the early ones. They were not very frequent, so that when it was circulated throughout the district that was one to be held on a certain date, the settlers were all agog. It didn't take long to reach a decision. But how to go. Meeting a fellow "hayseed" one afternoon, the all-important question was discussed at considerable length, finally it was settled that we go together, so, calling for him one real cold night, about six o'clock, we started off. Being a drive of some considerable distance, plus a trail that was none too good, it was badly drifted up, we arrived at the scene of the festivities rather late. But what a crowd. Everyone you knew from far and near, men, women and kids, all dolled up in their Sunday best, and as happy as could possibly be, their faces all a-glow with extra polishing. There was certainly no need of any introductions. And the temperature! Something fierce; it must have been one hundred degrees Fahrenheit, and as the evening wore on, my, it was, well, what shall we say—humming. Everyone was super-heated,

and in a rather small room, it is left to your imagination just to conceive what it was like !

Dancing was the chief turn of the evening, with the floor master very much in evidence, and his persistent cry of "lady around lady and gent around gent," "chassey," "swing your partner," etc., etc., but at intervals we were entertained by a "masterpiece" on the organ, by the leading organist and vocalist of the district. One song (save the mark) will forever live in my memory, the lines of the chorus being—to the best of my recollection—something like this :—

" Farewell, farewell, farewell, my fairy fay,
I'm off to Lousiana,
For to see my Susie Anna,
Singing polly wolly woddle all the day."

It was greeted with vociferous applause, and compliments galore, with cries for a repetition which so flattered the young lady that we had to endure the torture and hear the darned thing all over again.

Then came the supper, which is left for you to visualise—a small, very hot kitchen, freely perspiring humanity, tongues wagging to beat the band, plus the addition of boiling hot coffee. In order to supply the assembled crowd with this liquid refreshment, it had been made in a tin wash boiler, and was served out with a tin dipper. Everyone was as happy as mortals can be, the drive home, many of them having come a very considerable distance, not seeming to cause them any

anxiety or concern whatever. In these early days there was a certain "camaraderie" among people, and their hospitality was unbounded, as, should you be in the vicinity of one of their farms at meal time, or night-fall, you were more than welcome to eat or sleep, or both. One settler, when being asked if he would lend one of his farm implements, replied—"You're right welcome to anything I have except my gun, my saddle horse, or—my wife."

Of course, after a year or two, the young men of the district conceived the idea of establishing a club—social, no doubt, as it certainly wasn't literary—and so one summer all the prospective members arranged to build "something" that would fill the need of such a structure. By the time fall had arrived the building was almost completed, and 'ere winter set in the "club" was just about ready for occupation. Now to describe the building and its contents, but do not imagine that the furnishings were of a very elaborate nature, because they were far from it,—a table, a few chairs, a stove and a few etceteras, that's all. On the night of the "Grand Opening" the members from far and near rallied for the supreme ceremony. Who the president was, or anything else of that nature, history does not record; anyway, there must have been some impromptu words such as—"Gentlemen, we are gathered here to-night," etc. Whatever it was, short and sweet were the details; then, being somewhat thirsty, all hands rushed to the bar, which consisted of a five gallon keg of whisky, obtained from Winnipeg on a permit,

the bar-keeper, or M.C., or the man in charge (being the local meat provider, by the way), sitting astride the keg and doling it out as required—which probably was very frequently—in a tin cup. Water, do you ask? No—one would have only spoiled the other.

Without mentioning names, let it suffice to remark that one member, through the kindly deed of his friend (who had refrained from imbibing too freely), when he concluded that sufficient had been imbibed, with the very greatest of difficulty endeavoured to steer him home, only two miles; perhaps some of the readers of these pages can realise what such a walk signified, with an inebriated fellow for company. It was afterwards learned that our young friend, on reaching home, tried his very hardest to get into the oven. Now the old four-hole stove, with a side oven door, is, to say the least of it, small, but insist he would, yet he must have found it to be impossible, because next morning he was discovered outside the oven, on the floor. The morning no doubt brought the usual ill-effects.

An event occurred that summer to which reference must be made, as it has its humourous side, but you must recollect that a few years on the prairie roughened one a bit. To continue; one evening two respectably dressed and courteous visitors called at the house enquiring if they could put up for the night, the request being speedily granted. One man turned out to be a parson, and his friend a lay-reader. After the evening work was completed, quite a long "pow-wow" was held about different matters. On the approach of the

retiring hour our visitors were shown to their bedroom, which consisted of the whole of the upper floor, or attic, containing three large home-made beds ; this room was reached by means of a pole ladder. The beds were of the large, or family size (if there is such a thing)—what one might term the " Brigham Young " type. Naturally both of these gentlemen, being " good " men, said their prayers before retiring. Now here's where the wicked part came in. Seeing these two white-robed forms kneeling on either side of this huge bed was too much for the occupants of the other beds—they had probably tumbled in minus boots and hat and overalls—that they hardly refrained from laughing outright, but suppressed laughter these two fellows must have heard.

A year or so after, another lay-reader came to the district, but he met a very sad end almost the first winter he was there. These are the facts as near as can be recollected. He went to the mountains for a load of logs, giving orders to the boy in his employ to leave a light in the window if he did not return before dark. Towards evening, a severe blizzard came on. The boy, not wishing to remain alone, went to a neighbour's, forgetting to leave a light in the window. The man, on his way home, stopped for a short time at the house of a friend, about two miles from his own place. Owing to the severity of the storm, his friend urged him to stay, but in spite of all entreaties, and not wishing the boy to be left alone, he determined to push his way home. He reached some ploughing, where he unhitched his team, but, seeing no light, was unable to

find the house, and, wandering about, was lost. His team was found a few miles away. Although diligent search was made, he could not be found. After seven years his bleached remains were found, ten miles away from where he had unhitched his team. The skeleton found was that of a man over six feet in height, also some of the bones were found thirty yards apart, an evidence that the body had been eaten by wolves. With the remains were found a silver watch, a knife, and some remnants of clothing. At the inquest the jury returned a verdict "that he came to his death through being lost in a blizzard."

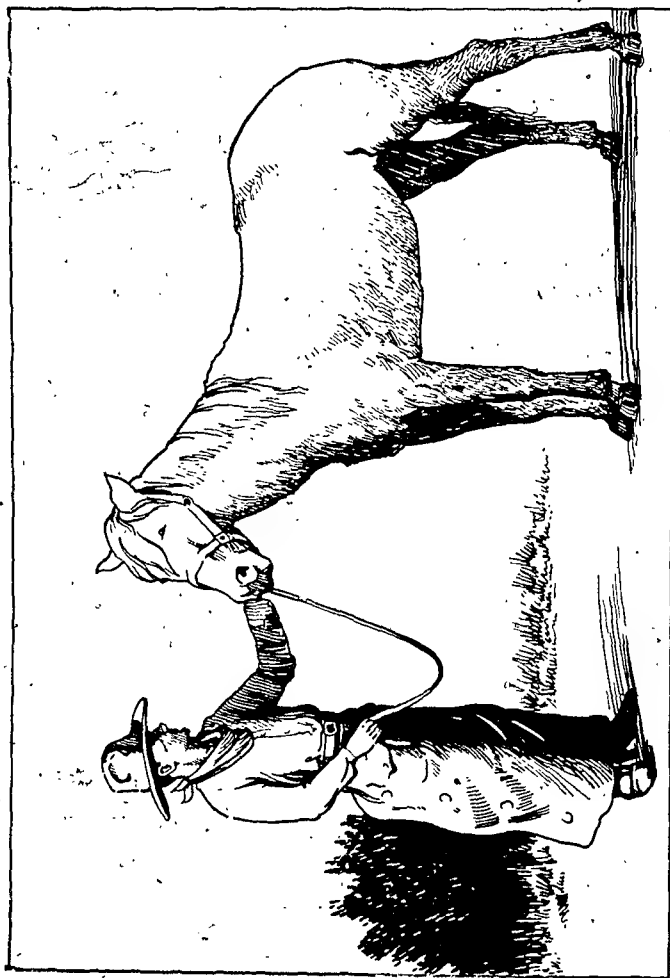
The following year another man lost his way in a blizzard. It seems that he was driving home with a load of wood, in a bad storm, and got off the trail; his body was never recovered, only the remains of a sleigh and the skeletons of his team. Another case was of a fellow returning home from visiting a settler. He got lost in the storm, but eventually reached a neighbour's house, when it was soon learned that he was badly frozen, so much so that it was found necessary to amputate his hands at the wrist and his feet at the ankles; and his nose, too, had to be replaced with an artificial one. Whiskey, or alcoholic liquor of any kind, and extreme cold weather do not agree, no sane person will take alcohol in extreme cold, for if they do, no one can say what the consequences might be. Why, ministers of the Gospel are not even exempt! There was a case at this time of a clergyman performing the marriage ceremony and later on driving the newly

wedded pair into town, but upon arrival it was found that he had been very painfully frozen ; he had had "one or two" before leaving, due, no doubt, to the entreaties of his "friends."

A bachelor's Christmas dinner, an event that had been looked forward to for a considerable time, took place one cold night in 188—. After a drive of some six miles, we arrived at the shack of our hosts ; two bachelor hosts and two bachelor guests. After having unhitched and seen that all the animals were fed and made snug for the night, all hands made a break for the interior of the shack. Here we found it fine and hot, and, after shedding our gear, a "powwow" was held, during which time considerable T. and B. was consumed, we "sat in." The banquet consisted of beaver, potatoes, tea, slapjack, and—a steamed pudding—my, what a luxury, and we did justice to it, too ; in fact, after the cold drive, the hot room, and our "Little Mary's" loaded to capacity, we became what you might call torpid. Can you wonder at it ? But that beaver. It must have been ninety-five per cent. fat. Ugh ! rich wasn't the word. Soon retiring time arrived—a straw mattress was thrown on the floor, so after filling up the stove with wood and discarding *some* clothing, we took to the mattress, pulling over us blankets, robes, fur coats, etc., anything we could find for a cover, tumbled in, and no doubt slept the sleep of the just. Tin plates and cups were used, as usual—crocery was too luxurious. The worst of tin is that it so easily rusts.

Just one more account of rather a miraculous escape from meeting with a nasty accident. A black stallion was among the stock on a farm, so one winter's afternoon the idea was suggested that he be given a run for exercise. A young fellow volunteered to ride him, and, as the animal was said to be quiet, only a halter was used, and he was ridden bareback. All went well until the return home, when the horse, no doubt cold and restless from standing while a sleigh was being loaded with firewood, made straight home for his stable, the rider, having no control over him, and being aware of the fact that it was a very low-roofed building, and just room for the horse to enter alone, was in somewhat of a quandary as to how to act on reaching the stable. Stable roofs were usually, at that time, of sod, that is, the roof covered with poles and then sods laid on top, with a rail at the bottom to prevent the sods falling off. Such was the case in this instance, so on arrival at the stable, the young fellow, with great presence of mind, grabbed this bottom pole, hung on to it, and allowed the horse to pass in from under him, and then he dropped to the ground. Had he not done so, the result might have been unpleasant.

Did you ever hear of the hired man turning a bunch of cattle out of the corral one morning, and when they started jumping and bucking and frolicking about, a spectator remarked that they seemed glad to be turned loose, when the remark came from the hired man, "Yes, it's like hell being let loose for recess." Or, of the man with whom the writer had breakfast with one early



"RAISED BY HAND."

morning, and during the meal an insect came down the wall. His host's attention being drawn to it, he transfixed it with his knife—with this knife he was eating a boiled egg. The "insect" was a "B" flat, or *Cinex Lectularius*. Or of the local blacksmith, finding it necessary to visit the store for some horse-shoe nails, and the proprietor, when weighing them out, trying to get the exact weight, putting one on and then off again several times; so exasperated was the blacksmith that he remarked—"If you'll bring a d——d nail down to the shop, I'll cut it in two for you."

Before bringing these pages to an end, there is just one more matter to touch upon, one that was a very live issue that that time, as paragraphs in the *Manitoba Free Press* of that time would show—the "Farm Pupil" question.

It is to be much regretted that an anti-Canadian feeling existed among some people. A considerable number of young men had come, or been sent out, from the Old Country to Canada, as farm pupils. Let us review these young men as they first arrive in the country. In nine cases out of ten, possibly, they are those who have proved a troublesome handful at home, the one in the family who is headstrong or lazy, unfitted for head-work or wanting in application, so the parents decided to send him "to Canada." Then they look out for a fit person to send him to, they provide him with an outfit, ship him off, and are rejoiced to reflect that someone else has taken the responsibility off their hands, and for one hundred pounds (\$500), or perhaps

two hundred pounds (\$1,000), he is satisfactorily and economically disposed of and in a fair way to earn a livelihood for himself.

The youth comes out with a truly wondrous opinion of his own value and importance, the novelty carries him on very fairly at first, and then, after a month or two, he becomes possessed of a rooted conviction that he is fully capable of running the entire farm, and in fact knows vastly more than the man who is instructing him. Some few have acquired a knowledge of farming in the Old Country, but the style of farming in this country and in that are so widely different that though his knowledge may be of some use to him, the mode of the Old Country farming has to be almost unlearned to fit him for the different ways in this. He is sent out to a gentleman farmer, probably in an English colony. Here he is received as "one of the family," which in this case represents a comfortable and pleasant home circle, who endeavour by all in their power to keep up the ways and manners of the Old Country from which they emigrated. He has to begin with the usual "chores." The meals are always plain, solid and liberal, and an interval after each is always allowed for rest. In the evening, after the "chores," which end the day's labour, are finished, work is set aside, with the working dress; pipes, books, writing, recreation, and pleasant intercourse end the day. If there is a church, everyone attends on Sunday, on which day the only work to be done is just the necessary attention to the animals. Thus, he becomes accustomed to work,

and will find his capabilities increase as his frame expands—gradually.

Here's another letter that appeared, concerning working for board and lodging.

The young fellow comes out from a comfortable home, expecting to rough it, he has no knowledge of farm work and is altogether "green." When he finds a farmer who will take him, he is told that he will be treated as one of the family, and so he is, poor thing, for he has to share, with his dirty and unkempt "master," his wife and children, one room, in which to eat, sleep, and live. He is out at four or five in the morning, and set to do the "chores," that is—milking, feeding pigs, etc., etc. He comes into breakfast, for which is generally provided—bacon, salty, cut very thick, fried very hard, swimming in fat, bread, and green tea—out immediately afterwards to do more work until dinner at twelve, which consists of more bacon, bread and tea; out again until supper, then more bacon, bread and tea, with perhaps treacle or stewed dried apples, after which the family "turn in"; and each day brings the same routine.

Disappointment and disgust follow, and the lad returns to the bosom of his family, cursing the country, and all in it, heartily. However, when all is said and done, any man who undertakes to teach young men farming must himself fully understand what he proposes to impart to others, and in no instance has it been known that a man to whom a premium has been paid was qualified to teach others. It was simply a

money-making idea from the first ; far better had they engaged the man and paid him a small wage to start with, and not, as was usually, in fact always, done, invariably give him all the menial work to do without any help or inducement for him to better his condition and learn something.

To cite one instance—Benwell, the Woodstock (Ont.) murderer, who was said to take pupils for the premium they paid him, and then tap them on the head.

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